

Rescue 7



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With an historic leadership role in EMS and at the forefront of Mississippi Trauma Care System, Southeast Mississippi Air Ambulance District (SEMAAD) voted their vision and brought to their taxpayers a state-of-the-art, one-of-only-two-of-its-kind in the nation air ambulance.

Board President Dr. Richard Clark led premiere flight and ribbon-cutting ceremonies today near the District's headquarters. State Health Officer Dr. Ed Thompson and Forrest General Hospital Vice President of Medical Affairs Dr. Bill Peters were invited to join Clark on the Forrest General helipad for the inaugural fly-in.

Invited guests from SEMAAD's nine-county coverage area along with news media and hospital staff and visitors applauded the new custom-designed Agusta A119 Koala, the new Rescue 7. Named Rescue 7 for the Mississippi Highway Patrol District in which it operates, the aircraft will fly some 600 missions this year to afford life-saving health care and transport throughout Covington, Forrest, Greene, Jefferson Davis, Lamar, Marion, Pearl River, Perry, and Walthall.

"The District is an EMS pioneer," declared Dr. Clark, a founder of SEMAAD. "Rescue 7 stands out as a service that has provided this area with state-of-the-art emergency medical services for three decades – a responsibility we take very seriously and, I believe, carry out very well."

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With the District created in 1970, SEMAAD claims distinction as the longest continuous running helicopter rescue operation in the United States. The only community, tax-supported air ambulance district in the nation gets the bigger, faster \$2.4 million aircraft with no increase in cost to member counties. The A119 Koala replaces a nine-year-old Bell Long Ranger.

“For some three decades, South Mississippians have relied on Rescue 7,” said Wade N. Spruill, Jr., SEMAAD chief executive officer. “Patients and families can continue to expect and get highly skilled instrument-rated pilots, exceptionally experienced paramedics to address their trauma needs, and critical care at the highest level of service we can possibly deliver.

“SEMAAD remains the only locally owned and operated service of its kind in Mississippi,” Spruill said. “We own the aircraft and its related equipment. We employ rather than contract with the pilots and EMS crews. We are fully dedicated to meeting current and yet unforeseen emergency health care needs throughout our community. We shall continue to lead in Mississippi Trauma Care System’s critically important clinical services arena.”

Spruill said the new Rescue 7 offers three major advantages: 70 cubic feet more space in the patient care area, giving two attendants full-body access to two patients; 43.5 percent more lifting power, accommodating both equipment and people needs; and 34 percent faster speed than the Bell, a significant improvement in getting patients to the hospital at the right time.

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